Whitehorse K-7 Schools

Update
Summer 2001

Thank you for your interest in the Department of Education's planning process for Whitehorse K-7 schools.

It is clear from the participation at school meetings in April and May that you care very much about your schools and about the future of your children's education.

We promised to update you before the end of the school year about the status of the planning process.

Inside is a description of the most frequent comments made at the public meetings as well as our plans for addressing those issues.

For more information contact Colin McDowell, Department of Education (867) 667 8181.

Yukon
Education

Some of you question our enrolment projections and our calculations of school capacity.

We arrived at our enrolment projections using well-established methods and highly reliable Statistics Canada population projection data. However, we will continue to verify our projections. We track our actual enrolment throughout the year, and we will use the information to regularly refresh our data.

On school capacity —our calculations were meant to provide a practical and objective way to compare elementary schools. Because of your comments, we adjusted the capacity for special needs classrooms from 16 to eight students.

We recognize capacity is affected by more than physical dimensions. It is also affected by programming requirements of the school. These will be important factors in our planning process.

You asked why the Department is committed to building an elementary school in Riverdale before the current planning process is complete.

The Minister reminded the public of the commitment made during the election campaign to rebuild Grey Mountain School. Our task in the Department is to provide good information on this, as well as on all other issues related to the future planning for K-7 schools in Whitehorse.

Some of you question the Department's plan to build additions to the two Catholic elementary schools when enrolment is declining.

Because of your concerns, the Department took a critical second look at the decision to build additions to the two Catholic schools. However, the Department has decided to proceed with the work for the following reasons:

The additions will complete the Grade Reorganization that was started about four years ago. Catholic elementary schools provide Kindergarten to Grade Six. The additions will mean all elementary schools in Whitehorse will offer Grade Seven.

The relocation of Grade Seven to the elementary schools will relieve crowded conditions at Vanier Catholic Secondary School.

Many of you believe that if the Department were stricter in managing attendance areas, vacancy rates would be more balanced across schools.

The Department of Education's policy has been – space permitting — to accommodate parents' choices of schools for their children. Many parents have been happy with this policy. This area poses one of the core challenges for all of us involved in this planning process. How do we accommodate parental choice and also manage the school system in a balanced and equitable way?

In response to your questions at the school meetings, we provided additional information on out-of-area attendance. (See the charts on the back of this brochure.) The Department will seek further comment on this issue during the fall consultation.

Some of you say the Department should not allow non-Catholic students to attend Catholic schools.

Again, the Department of Education's policy has been – space permitting — to accommodate parental choice. The attendance policies at the Catholic schools have reflected this. We plan to discuss the points you have raised with the Catholic Episcopal Corporation and the affected school councils.

Many of you feel that the Department should be less generous with busing, so that neighborhood schools can thrive.

We are analyzing the busing we provide to find out how many children are being bused to schools outside their attendance areas. More detailed research into the impact of busing will be part of the planning process. The information will be provided during the fall consultation.

You suggest small class sizes are not a problem – they present opportunities to enhance education.

In general, we agree with this point of view. The Department has in fact taken advantage of declining elementary class numbers by assigning teachers to provide additional programming that supports regular classroom work. An example is the highly successful early intervention program, Reading Recovery. These are the kinds of initiatives we hope to continue.

Providing excellence in education and successful programming is what this planning process is all about. We will continue to welcome your ideas on this during the fall consultation.

Some of you believe the French First Language school should be included in the Whitehorse K-7 schools planning process.

The French First Language school was built with specific federal funding. A student's eligibility to attend a French First Language school is determined by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As such, there is little planning flexibility associated with the school.

Some of you are uncomfortable that no members of the public are on the planning team that will develop scenarios for Whitehorse K-7 schools.

While the planning team consists of employees of the Department of Education, its job will be to come up with scenarios that will each include several options. We will be encouraging your feedback on these scenarios during our fall consultation. You will have an important role in helping us plan for the future of Whitehorse K-7 schools. We intend to have ample opportunity for broad public debate of the issues and for the sharing of ideas and concerns.

You want to know the guiding principles the Department will use in planning scenarios for schools.

The principles have been influenced by comments we heard from you. Planning will focus on:

Excellence	Providing the best education possible for Whitehorse children.
Effectiveness	Ensuring that appropriate facilities support the delivery of quality programs.
Efficiency	Using resources in a fiscally and operationally sound manner.
Equity	Ensuring fairness as well as effectiveness and efficiency.
Creativity	Exploring ideas, being open to possibilities and challenging the status quo.

Whitehorse K-7 Schools Planning Schedule

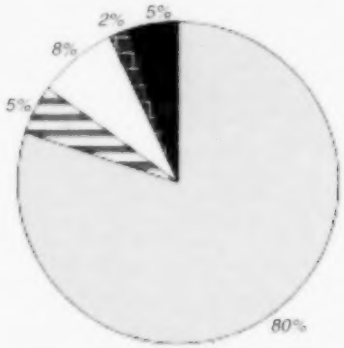
Phase I	**Information-Sharing**	**April/May 2001**
Phase II	**Development of Scenarios**	**Summer 2001**
Phase III	**Public Consultation**	**Fall 2001**
Phase IV	**Finalization of K-7 Plan**	**Winter 2001**
Phase V	**Begin Implementation**	**Fall 2002**

Whitehorse K-7 Catchment Area Enrolment Distribution

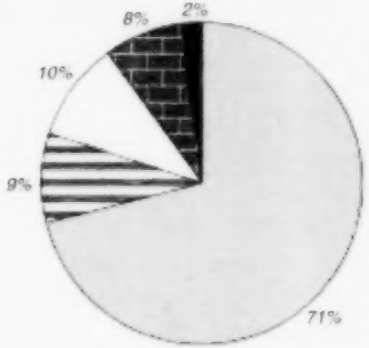
These graphs represent the schools that students attend from each of the designated catchment areas. All non-denominational schools outside the catchment area have been grouped together for simplicity.

Golden Horn area
323 students live in area

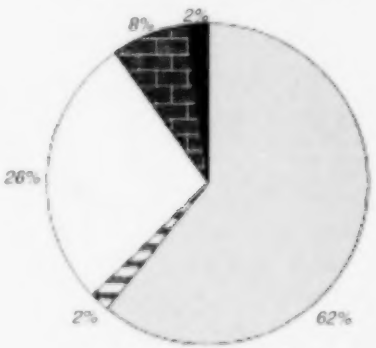
Hidden Valley area
172 students live in area



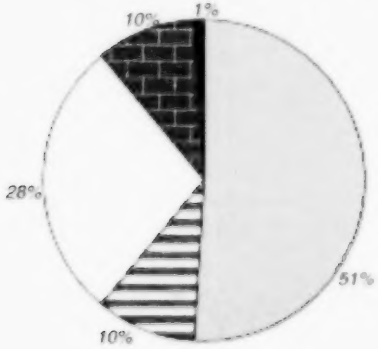
Takhini area
273 students live in area



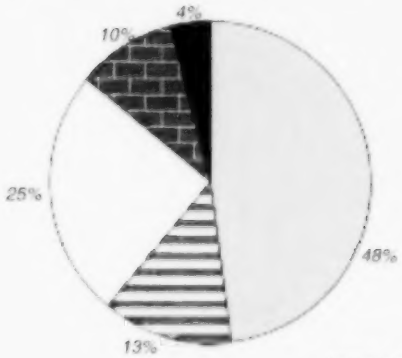
Jack Hulland area
640 students live in area



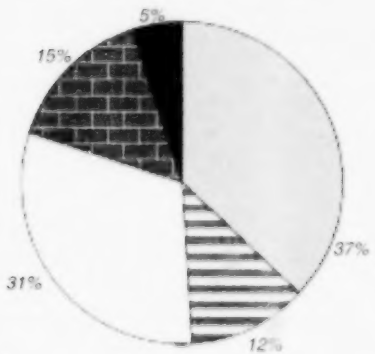
Selkirk area
399 students live in area



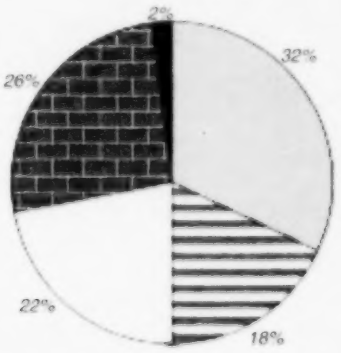
Grey Mountain area
124 students live in area



Elijah Smith area
494 students live in area



Whitehorse Elementary area
126 students live in area



March 31, 2001 data